Customize appearance

Fans Say Eminem Speaks To Them

Nearly 1,000 people showed up for in-store session.
By archive-Jon-Vena
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April 15, 1999 / 3:01 PM
BOSTON -- In a city famous for the "Cheers" bar where "everybody knows your name," there was no need for Marshall Mathers, of all people, to say "My Name Is" when he arrived this week for two shows, several interviews and an autograph session at Tower Records.

The nearly 1,000 people who put up with a line stretching two blocks down posh Newbury Street on Wednesday for a chance to get his signature knew Mathers is also Eminem. His second album, *The Slim Shady LP,* has been one of the country's best-selling albums since its release two months ago.

His single "My Name Is" (RealAudio excerpt) is getting airplay on four stations in Boston alone.

His life, several of the fans said, reminds them of their own, particularly what he has described as a rough-and-tumble upbringing with a single mother in Detroit and Kansas City.

"I came here at 6 o'clock this morning," said Carlos Ruiz, 18, who handed the rap star a demo tape showcasing his own mixing skills. Ruiz grasped his freshly autographed copy of the current issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine, which features Eminem on the cover.

"The 'If I Had' song is my life story," Ruiz said. "I can relate to him a lot."

"He is so innovative," Loretta Freitas, 17, of Boston said. "Some of the things he says are so inspirational. Sh-- has come such a long way, where everything used to be censored. He just says it. He came from nothing -- and that's about what I have right now."

Eminem has a brash persona on record, but proved friendly in person. He signed multiple items for each fan, including an odd assortment of posters, body parts and even a dollar bill. He greeted everyone with a smile and apparent enthusiasm.

"It's one of the biggest in-store appearances we've had," Tower supervisor Dana Duffy, 25, said. "We were getting calls throughout the day, and even though he looked pressed for time, he was really friendly towards everyone he met, and he tried to apologize to the few fans he didn't get to see."

Days before the appearance, fliers were hung reminding fans they wouldn't be allowed to camp overnight. By Wednesday morning a handful of supporters began assembling, forming a ragged row of mostly teenage fans. The line would eventually meander down Newbury Street, which is lined with galleries, salons and cafés.

Fans held vinyl Eminem LPs, CD booklets and copies of magazines featuring the rapper. They shuffled to a rear door of the record store into a black room where Eminem's

bold-faced logo, carved in gigantic, foam-board letters, hung on the wall.

Eminem, who arrived at Tower in a limousine, was in town for shows at Boston College and about 30 minutes away at the Worcester Palladium.

While most waiting to meet him talked about Eminem's rapping and rhyming skills, many women, including Mickey Mitchell, 16, also took note of the rapper's look.

"Well, he's cute," Mitchell chuckled. "He's from my hometown of Detroit, and I think he's going to bring Detroit out more than any black rappers have."

When asked if it matters that Eminem is white, Mitchell, who is black, said, "He's got mad skills, and that's all that counts. And that's all that's going to matter in the future of

hip-hop."

One fan, however, said he was on hand to protest some of the rapper's messages.

"He's a bad influence on white hip-hop," Blake Cohen, 18, said. "Every white rapper that comes out now tends to be 'crazy.' He's set a tone that people are going to follow. I think it's overboard, with songs about raping people and stuff -- much of his stuff is too negative."

"I didn't bring sh-- to autograph," Cohen added. "I want to meet him, and talk to him in person. I own the record, but I'm opposed to some of the messages he spreads."

Most fans, though, were just happy to meet one of their favorite musicians.

"After meeting him, I think he's a very good guy," Toby Bryan, 16, said. "He's just coming out of Michigan, doing his own thing, trying to make something out of life. I think he's going to be big."